

# A Little Information about Immunisations

## Childhood Diseases

There are many dangerous childhood diseases which now have effective immunisations against them.

### What are they?

- Diphtheria** This starts as a throat infection, but can quickly cause breathing difficulties. It can also affect the heart and nervous system and is sometimes fatal.
- Tetanus** Tetanus can be a painful disease which causes severe muscle contractions, including the muscles that control breathing and swallowing. It is contracted through contaminated soil and manure and gets into the body through open cuts. It is often fatal.
- Pertussis** Whooping Cough is a disease which can be very serious for children under 1 year old and will often be fatal. It causes prolonged bouts of coughing and choking, making it very hard to breathe. It can last up to ten weeks.
- Polio** Poliomyelitis is a virus that attacks the nervous system and can result in paralysis of the muscles. If it affects the chest muscles or the brain it can be fatal.
- Hib** Hib (Haemophilus Influenzae type b) is an infection that can cause many illnesses such as meningitis, blood poisoning, pneumonia. All these illnesses can be fatal if not treated quickly. It will only protect your child against one type of meningitis (Hib)
- Mumps** Mumps is caused by a virus which causes an infection in the salivary glands. The symptoms are a fever, swollen glands in the face, neck and jaw and a headache. It can lead to deafness, viral meningitis, encephalitis and in some cases painful swelling of the testicles in men.
- Measles** Measles is characterised by a high fever, rash and generally feeling unwell. It is highly infectious and can cause complications in some children leading to chest infections, encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and brain damage. In very serious cases it can be fatal.

**Rubella** Rubella (German Measles) is a disease which can be mild and often unnoticed in children. It is characterised by a slight fever, rash, swollen glands and sore throat. Complications are rare. However it is very serious for unborn babies. If contracted in the first three months of pregnancy it can seriously damage the hearing, sight, heart and brain of the unborn child.

**Meningitis C** Meningitis C is characterised by the inflammation of the lining of the brain and results from a bacterial infection caused by the organism *Neisseria meningitidis*. The Men C vaccine protects children from only one type of meningitis, it does not protect against others. Meningitis is not easy to identify as the symptoms are similar to Flu. It can develop quickly and in just a few hours the person can be seriously ill.

**Varicella (Chickenpox)** Chickenpox is a highly infectious disease caused by the varicella zoster virus. It is characterised by a blister type rash. The first infection with the varicella zoster virus will cause chickenpox, if reactivated it may cause shingles. It is not uncommon to get contract chickenpox even though you have been vaccinated.

**Tuberculosis (BCG)** Tuberculosis is an infection which most commonly affects the lungs, but it can affect the bones, joints and kidneys. It is caused by the bacterium, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

**Human Papillovirus HPV** This is a new vaccine to help protect girls against the Human papillovirus which could cause Cervical Cancer. There are two products on the market, Cervarix and Gardasil

**Rotavirus** Rotavirus is a virus that infects the stomach and is spread through contact with faecal matter either by direct contact or via the respiratory tract. It is extremely common in children. If not treated it may make the child extremely ill through dehydration as a result of the diarrhoea and vomiting.